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**OVERVIEW OF PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Place Scrutiny Committee has undertaken.

**Work Programme 2013/14**

2. We have given consideration to the Work Programme for this Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal Year 2013/14 and possible review topics. Following discussion we agreed to update the Work Programme to reflect the decisions of the Committee. We will seek specific updates on on-going projects particularly the Economic Strategy, the Car Parking Strategy and the Local Plan in this Municipal Year. We have contributed to work on the Medium Term Financial Plan and given consideration to the proposals which fall within the remit of Place Scrutiny Committee.
3. We have agreed to keep the work of Street Scene street cleaning, litter and grounds maintenance project at the forefront of our Work Programme. We will pursue developments on Cockerton Library and the Head of Steam through our Cultural Services Review Group and we look forward to receiving a report on Regulatory Services of the Council in order for Committee to decide which element it wishes to concentrate on.
4. In relation to the Local Plan and particularly the Retail/Town Centre Study, we were advised of a Town Centre Conference scheduled for 27 March organised in conjunction with Distinct Darlington.

**Parking Strategy**

5. The Committee gave consideration to the outcome of public consultation on the draft Parking Strategy 2014-2026 and also submitted its views thereon. Committee were advised that Cabinet had approved the Strategy in July 2013 as the basis of public consultation and for the period September to early October the public, businesses and transport operators were invited to comment by various means including attendance at 'drop in' sessions, online surveys and by post. Residents in parking zone areas had received a letter inviting comments on the Strategy.
6. The consultation had resulted in many comments being received in relation to Town Centre Parking, Residents' Parking Zones, parking in Cockerton, the Blue Badge Scheme and parking provision for disabled drivers. Some consultees had focused on the recommended actions rather than the overall strategy objectives.

7. The Committee also gave consideration to the views of members of the public affected by Residents' Parking Zones and Town Centre Parking.
8. Members made several observations and comments regarding the Strategy which would be included as part of the consultation exercise. These include our view that there is an urgent need for a system to allow tradespeople to park in restricted zones more easily and cheaply than at present and similarly there is also a need for visitor parking to be provided for in Resident Parking Zones (RPZ). We look forward to these aims being achieved by this summer, though accepting that a more general review of RPZs must be deferred until 2016/17.
9. We welcomed the additional policy objective that 'information is publicly available on the revenues generated from Civil Parking Enforcement and Parking Charges and how that revenue is spent.' We also felt that the distinction between these two sources of income should be stressed in order to combat public perceptions more strongly. Contingency plans for parking arrangements at Feethams because of proposed development should be communicated to all Councillors in the form of a briefing note and improved signage for all car parks should be pursued.

### **Markets Review Group**

10. As part of the work that Committee are undertaking on the Markets Review we undertook a tour of the Indoor Market, including the basement area and the Clock Tower.
11. It was suggested that individual Councillors make conversation with stallholders and those discussions and the note of our visit to the Indoor Markets were discussed at our Review Group meeting on 13 March.

### **Sustainable Community Strategy**

12. Scrutiny held a special meeting to give consideration to a proposed vision for the Council which will be used as a basis for a revised Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) which contains updated objectives and new conditions of Building Stronger Communities, Every Public Pound Well Spent and Economic Growth, to reflect the current climate. Our views were sought on the three objectives, relevant to Place Scrutiny, of more businesses and more jobs, more people caring for our environment and a place designed to thrive.

**Councillor Dorothy Long**  
**Chair of Place Scrutiny Committee**